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SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY *PRONK POPPENHUISEN*: DOMESTIC SPACE AND THE RITUAL FUNCTION OF DUTCH DOLLHOUSES FOR WOMEN

MICHELLE MOSELEY-CHRISTIAN RECEIVED HER PHD FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS IN 2007, SPECIALIZING IN THE STUDY OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH AND FLEMISH PAINTING AND THE ARTS OF NORTHERN EUROPE FROM 1400 TO 1600. RESEARCH PROJECTS INCLUDE A STUDY OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH AND FLEMISH INFORMAL PORTRAITS SET IN SCENES OF EVERYDAY LIFE. DR MOSELEY-CHRISTIAN IS CURRENTLY AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY AT VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY.

ABSTRACT A number of *pronk poppenhuisen*, or "dollhouses for show" were commissioned in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Netherlands for adult women. The large wooden cabinets with multiple partitioned spaces construct a fully furnished Dutch home in miniature, complete with dolls representing family, servants, and pets. The dollhouses have been primarily regarded as sophisticated collections enjoyed by elite female connoisseurs. This study will investigate

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the surviving dollhouses of Petronella de la Court, Petronella Dunois, and Petronella Oortman as complex didactic objects that prescribed an ideal domestic identity for Dutch mothers and wives in the early modern Netherlands, in part through a three-dimensional structure that encouraged a tactile, physically interactive relationship with the viewer. Manipulation of the dolls within selective, gendered architectural spaces allowed the dollhouse owners to visualize the ideal Dutch home and "perform" their appropriate role within it as productive, disciplined, and orderly wives, mothers, and domestic managers.

KEYWORDS: dollhouses, Petronella Dunois, Petronella de la Court, Petronella Oortman, seventeenth-century Dutch material culture

A number of so-called *pronk poppenhuisen*, or "dollhouses for show," were commissioned in the late seventeenth-century Netherlands, three examples of which survive in excellent condition today: the dollhouses of Petronella de la Court (Figure 1), 1670–1690 (Utrecht, Centraal Museum); Petronella Dunois (Figure 2), c. 1676–1700 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum); and a dollhouse of Petronella Oortman (Figure 3), c. 1686–1710 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum).[1] The dollhouses themselves represent remarkable

Figure 1
Dollhouse of Petronella de la Court, 1670–1690, multimedia, variable dimensions, Utrecht, Centraal Museum.

Figure 2
Dollhouse of Petronella Dunois, *c.* 1676–1700, multimedia, variable dimensions, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

works of craftsmanship in the form of large wooden cabinets with doors that, when open, allow a view of multiple partitioned spaces, replicating the fully furnished rooms of a Dutch canal home. Tiny paintings, bed curtains, silverware, pewter jugs, and ceramic tiles, among a variety of other goods, were commissioned from artists and craftsmen in order to construct these dollhouses as a wealthy burgher's

Figure 3
Dollhouse of Petronella Oortman, *c.* 1686–1710, multimedia, variable dimensions, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

residence in miniature. Small dolls representing each member of a seventeenth-century Dutch household, including a husband, wife, children, servants, and even pets, were also part of the arrangements.

The elaborate *pronk poppenhuisen* were not commissioned for children, but for adult women, raising interpretive questions concerning the implications of female collectors choosing artifacts modeled after toys. As expensive possessions that were owned and displayed by women, these dollhouses complicate our understanding of domestic visual culture as it relates to women as wives and mothers in the early modern Netherlands (Pijzel-Dommisse 2000: 12). These exquisite works have been noted for their whimsical quality as diminutive and beautiful decorative works, and have been chiefly interpreted as objects that represented the wealth, status, and privilege of their female collectors. The dollhouses most certainly functioned as emblems of taste and refinement for the elite; however, this study proposes a new interpretive approach examining the ritual function of dolls, display, and the performative nature of ritual play within early modern Dutch visual culture. Interrogating the specific choice of dollhouses as collector's prize reveals the relationship of these objects to deeply integrated moralizing lessons for appropriate female behavior. The dollhouses act as a new and unexplored vehicle for traditional gender prescriptives that shaped domestic roles within seventeenth-century Dutch culture. These prescriptions for domestic gender roles informed architectural theory and, I argue, are manifested in the idealized construction of *pronk poppenhuisen*. The dollhouses reinforced widely held perceptions of gendered architectural space and domestic responsibility that were actualized in the owner's experience through the practice of ritual play. The didactic nature of the dollhouse was furthered by the physical act of arranging the dolls, furnishings, and accoutrements through the engagement of ritual play, effecting a performance of ideal womanhood. The dollhouses thus functioned as an elaborate, participatory three-dimensional conduct manual for housewives and mothers who strove to achieve the domestic ideal pictured before them.

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF *PRONK POPPENHUISEN*

The fancy dollhouses have been mentioned as extraordinary and unusual works in various texts and documents, including eighteenth-century traveler's diaries, inventories, and other descriptive records (Pijzel-Dommisse 2000: 225–6, 270–345).[2] The focus of notable contemporary seventeenth- and eighteenth-century discourse on the dollhouses often concentrates on the exquisite quality of the furnishings, reflected in their cost. One account by Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, a traveler from Germany visiting the Netherlands in 1718, places the cost of Petronella Oortman's dollhouse between 20,000 and 30,000 guilders (ter Molen 1994: 122). This grand sum was roughly the price of a fully furnished canal home, a somewhat suspect

figure even for such a richly appointed dollhouse. The probable inflation of the dollhouse's value speaks more directly to the overwhelming impression the dollhouse must have made on Uffenbach as a grandiose spectacle rather than its actual cost.

In addition to their status as marvel and curiosity, scholars' interpretive approaches to the dollhouses have generally classified them as different varieties of collector's objects for women. In the most thorough study of the dollhouses, Jet Pijzel-Dommisse asserts that the lavish *pronk poppenhuisen* are versions of the *kunstkamer* (literally, art room) made appropriate for wealthy and discriminating women of the regent (patrician) and burgher classes (2000: 13–17). Pijzel-Dommisse compares the *pronk* dollhouses in construction, function, and display to the popular *kunstkamers* kept by art collectors in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Northern Europe (2000: 13–18). *Kunstkamer* collections took the form of either a whole room serving as an art gallery, or as an opulent cabinet. *Kunstkamer* cabinets were expensive and visually complex enclosures used to store collections of precious objects such as prints, exotic shells, books, and specimens of unusual insects, among other examples of rare or curious objects. Elite male connoisseurs owned such cabinets, and displayed their precious cache of goods within highly selective intellectual circles. *Kunstkamers* therefore are understood as possessions that mark their owners as collectors of discriminating taste, wealth, and knowledge. Within a similar context of collecting, Mariët Westermann's (2001: 43–5) and Martha Hollander's (2002: 124–7) analyses of the dollhouses frame discussion of the large cabinets in relationship to prized perspective boxes made during the seventeenth century, which featured optical distortions derived from scenes of domestic interiors painted inside the boxes.

Though the *pronk poppenhuisen* were sumptuous signifiers of taste and refinement that stood testament to a patron's connoisseurship, the nuances of how these extraordinary collections were manipulated by the owners for viewing, and the ritual functions of these tactile, hand-held domestic objects in miniature, have remained unexplored. Categorizing these dollhouses solely as status symbols for wealthy burgher's wives limits our understanding of the exceptionally interactive nature of the dollhouses whose myriad furnishings were created to function as closely as possible to the objects they replicated. Chests filled with folded linens, tables laden with foodstuffs, and cleaning implements ready for service are but a few examples of the domestic details that are common to these fancy dollhouses. Doors, cabinets, and curtains were opened and closed, creating a sense of anticipation and surprise in revealing hidden spaces (Pijzel-Dommisse 2000: 26–7, 256). The dolls were even more mobile than the generally fixed furnishings, which were created to inhabit specific rooms. The dolls, however, traveled from room to room, were posed, removed, and held closely to appreciate the fine detail of garments and adornments. The

dollhouse contents therefore were to some degree moved, shifted, placed, and posed, in other words, activated by the handler within the context of the dollhouse arrangement.

EARLY MODERN DIDACTIC DOLL CULTURE

Various studies have proposed that dolls in some early modern European cultures had very specific ties to encouraging and shaping acceptable female behavior, a function that may have influenced a Dutch patron's choices in choosing the dollhouse format. The use of toys in the seventeenth-century Netherlands as didactic tools to enforce moral and social order for children is well established, and has been linked to textual sources such as emblem books and household manuals (Durantini 1983: 178–99). Other examples of toys in didactic and ritual contexts throughout medieval and early modern Europe, and the location of these objects within an adult, female domestic sphere, suggest that these dollhouses, modeled after toys on a lavish scale, may have fulfilled a similar admonitory function. It is the location of these role-playing objects within an adult, female domestic sphere that suggests the instructive function of toys was adapted to a wider audience, including women.

The prevalence of a didactic doll culture was prominent within parts of Europe, since dolls and puppets had long been used as aids to instruct viewers, especially within the framework of sermons or religious theater (Klapisch-Zuber 1987: 310). Christiane Klapisch-Zuber has investigated the use of dolls in nuptial rituals within the context of medieval and early modern Italian bridal traditions (1987: 311). Inventories, bequests, and dowries record a number of Italian dolls because of their monetary value, which was also a key detail in eighteenth-century desciptions of the Dutch *pronk poppenhuisen*. The range of Italian documents reveals that dolls, usually male, were often given to women on the occasion of their marriage. These dolls were expensive objects, garbed in costly fabrics and jewels, as noted for example in the inventory of Lorenzo the Magnificent's sister, Nannina de Medici. An accounting of her trousseau from 1466 lists "a bambino with a damask dress embroidered with pearls" (Klapisch-Zuber 1987: 311). Such dolls were not toys, but were ritually employed to encourage fertility for the newly married couple by reminding the bride of her duty and by visualizing the children the marriage would hopefully produce. In many cases the dolls were replicas of the infant Jesus, given to women of the laity and also to nuns (Klapisch-Zuber 1987: 312–7). While the devotional aspect of such "holy dolls" is far removed from later examples of Dutch *pronk poppen* (best dolls for show), the Italian dolls are valuable for this study as long-standing precedents for the cultural practice of directing and molding gender-specific behavior in adult women using toy-like objects activated through ritual play.

Like Italian dolls given to a new bride, Dutch dolls and dollhouses for show appear to have functioned in part to reinforce and

encourage the recipient's identity as wife and mother. The dollhouses of Petronella Dunois and Petronella Oortman were commissioned in anticipation of, or in tandem with, the marriage of their respective owners. Petronella Dunois' elaborate dollhouse is dated to 1676, based on Petronella's initials and the date embroidered on a pillow that was part of the original furnishings kept in the lying-in room. The dollhouse was built and assembled immediately before her marriage to regent Pieter van Groenendijck the following year, in 1677, and was specifically noted in their marriage contract as an item she brought to the union (Pijzel-Dommisse 2000: 181).

Petronella Oortman's dollhouse was commissioned in 1686, the year of her marriage to merchant Johannes Brandt. The repeated motif of the combined initials "BO" (Brandt-Oortman) for the owner and her husband are inlaid into the exterior sides of the cabinet and incorporated into the design of the interior rooms, in the lying-in room, the hall, and napkins in the dining room (Pijzel-Dommisse 1994: 8). The date of the dollhouse suggests the commemoration, or at least celebration, of the couple's new union. The third dollhouse owner, Petronella de la Court, married in 1649 and her dollhouse is thought to have been assembled between 1670 and 1690, although the actual date of the commission is unknown (van Eeghen 1960: 159). If the attributed date is correct, Petronella de la Court's dollhouse is the only *pronk* dollhouse of the three purchased after the woman's marriage (van der Ploeg 2003: 97–100). The circumstances of patronage for the three dollhouses are not entirely clear—for example, it is not known who paid for them, although the three women are listed as owners of their own dollhouses in inventories and other documents.[3]

THE DOLLHOUSE AS INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL

Dolls and dollhouses were produced throughout the sixteenth century in Northern Europe, and were products of a well-established craft tradition in Germany and in the Low Countries. A tradition of richly ornamented German dollhouses made for children, for example, functioned as instructive tools to acquaint them with proper social roles (King 1983: 34–40). Dutch *pronk* dollhouses are distinctive because they are the most lavish examples of complete replica homes in the seventeenth century and were made for adult women rather than children. The construct of dollhouses as devices to educate and remind women of their social and cultural obligations borrows directly from the tradition of children's toys. The role of toys, including dolls and their accessories, in early modern Dutch culture is associated in images and texts with both children and adults as objects that represent the brevity of life, and were perceived as potential vehicles for virtue or vice (Durantini 1983: 191–208). Warnings often appeared in pamphlets and emblem books identifying toys as agents of folly. Games and toys, like dolls, were thought to exert a destructive

influence by engendering idleness and eroding self-control (Durantini 1983: 178–9). A stanza published in J. A. Calom's (1626) emblem book *Minne Plicht* (Duties of Love) refers to the potential for dolls, especially expensive ones, to "lead girls to luxury and vanity," by setting value according to material wealth rather than personal virtue.[4]

References to toys were not only cited to warn of alarming behavior in Dutch youth, they were just as frequently employed to refer to adult vices as well. Johann de Brune's (1624) collection of illustrated moral aphorisms known as *Zinne-Werck* (Moralizing Emblems) includes a warning about the transience of material pleasures:

> All Earthly matter is child's play,
> All that we see here on the ground
> Are children's toys and nothing else
> The man plays with what he finds there
> Just like the child
> He is amused for a short time only
> Then he easily throws it away
> So the man therefore, as we find,
> Is not twice, but forever a child. (de Brune 1970[1624])[5]

Children's games were, therefore, often encoded with the significance of weighty adult matters.

Despite some negative associations with dolls and toys, emblem books also emphasize the theme of children's games and toys as virtuous, taking a common pastime and investing it with moral and social instruction (Durantini 1983: 206). The anonymous author of the emblem book *Kinder-werck* (Children's work) (1626) relates games to learning skills and developing goals (Franits 1993: 108). Education for women was based on skills acquired in the home and predicated on the practice of learning by example. This concept was an essential feature of admonitory sources dedicated to female behaviors, as well as a prevalent subject within domestic themes in the Dutch visual arts. For children, this meant looking to adults as models for behavior, and for girls such training was predicated on imitating adult behavior through role-play with dolls. Among a wide range of toys, girls are most often shown with dolls in Dutch art (Durantini 1983: 249). A detail from an engraved illustration by Adriaen Van de Venne for *Kinderspel* (Children's Games), Jacob Cats' frontispiece for *Houwelyck* (Marriage), his treatise from 1625, depicts a variety of children's games, including a group of girls in the foreground playing with dolls and small household utensils. The text clarifies the beneficial connection between productive play and learning:

> See, children, so how adults
> Follow after the young.
> Little girls play with dolls,

> The little boy shows greater courage;
> The little girl rocks the cradle,
> The little boy beats the drum;
> The little girl plays with small objects
> That are serviceable in the kitchen;
> The little boy plays with a useless lance, as do rough men.
> (Cats 1993[1625]: 8)[6]

In terms of toys that are gender-specific, Dutch naturalist Johannes van Berkhey's treatise *Natural History* also encourages doll-play as useful in teaching practical domestic skills (van Berkhey 1763: 1340). Numerous Dutch paintings and prints depict children using dolls to mimic adult behavior, such as a mid-century painting known as *The Lacemaker* (Private Collection), by Quiringh Brekelenkam. The mother is representative of virtuous and industrious work as she engages in the process of lace making with a young child nearby, who practices her own nascent household skills with a doll. The ritual nature of doll play outside the realm of children's toys is depicted in a pen drawing by an unknown artist, dated 1665 (New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery) (Figure 4). In the drawing a female figure seated on the floor plays with a doll and its accessories: clothes, and a cradle. The image represents what appears to be a well-dressed young woman or an older girl, not a very young child as is typically shown in images of doll-play, and is described in Fock's catalog *Het Nederlandse Interieur in Beeld 1600–1900* on early modern Dutch interiors as a "housewife," in reference to her current or possibly her future status (Fock 2001a: 122). The Yale drawing and the dollhouses themselves indicate that use of dolls for ritualized role-playing and as a mode of instruction was not exclusively confined to very young children.

The choice of dolls and dollhouses as art objects for women may reflect the increased cultural focus on the Dutch home and the role of

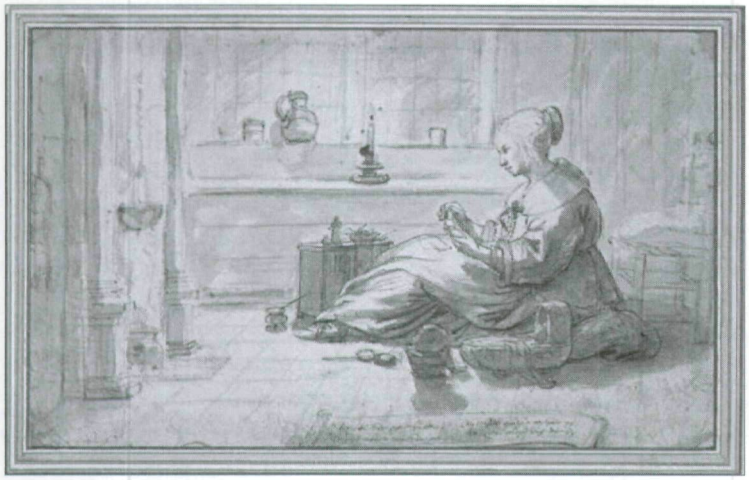

Figure 4
Unknown Dutch Artist, *Young Woman Taking Care of a Doll*, 1665, New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery.

Hier ziet gij wet beermaah de kinders opgetogen /
En ook een Ouders plight als na zijn bremgen.
K 43
Hier bakermen t'kint
Hier geglmen t'kint eten
Hier wiechmen t'kint
Hier araechmen kint
Hier leermen t'kint gaen
Hier spelen de knechtekens
Hier spelen de dochterkens
Knechtekens School gaen
dochterkens school gaen
knechtekens ambacht leeren
dochterkens leeren een ambacht
Hier vryen de Jongmans
Hier slaytment houwelyck
Hier trouwense
Hier gaense na trouwen
Bruyloft
t'Amsterdam, by J. KANNEWET, Boekverkooper in de Nes, in de Gekroonde Jaght Pybel.

Figure 5
Johannes Kannewet, *Didactic Print*, eighteenth-century, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum.

women in the home during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (de Mare 1993: 109; Rybczynski 1987: 25–43). The fancy dollhouses flourished in Dutch visual culture during the second half of the seventeenth century, a time when the domestic interior became one of the most frequently recurring themes in Dutch art. Depictions of interiors often take the form of quiet scenes in which women cleaning house or caring for children, among other routine duties, are repeatedly represented in genre paintings and prints of daily life. In fact, comparisons between the dollhouses and probate inventories confirm that the houses are indeed a close (although selective) reflection of the late-seventeenth-century Dutch domestic world (Westermann 2001: 43). Thus, *pronk poppenhuisen* which showcase the same quotidian themes in a performative, interactive, and three-dimensional format may have similarly served as object lessons that visualized the ideal Dutch home and family, recalling and reinforcing for women their role as productive mother and housekeeper. Powerful and interactive visual reminders of duty and obligation such as this, as Klapisch-Zuber has noted in her discussion of didactic dolls, serve to transfer by example the virtue they represent to the viewer who contemplates them (Klapisch-Zuber 1987: 217).

The virtues that women were admonished to demonstrate, visualized by the *pronk poppenhuisen*, were also outlined in numerous texts and treatises of instructional or moralizing literature, often in the form of directives for properly run and maintained households. Golden Age Dutch culture was seen as dependent on the successful propagation of home and family, and the large number of conduct books and moralizing texts that were widely available and popular, for example, Jacob Cats' 1625 book *Houwelyck* (Marriage) functioned to give shape to the appropriate social and gender roles of women. Cats' treatise on proper behavior in marriage alone sold an estimated 50,000 copies by the mid-century, and was published in numerous editions through the early eighteenth century (Brown 1984: 58; Peacock 2003: 43).

Didactic narrative prints, widely available to the Dutch public in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, further illustrate such behavioral models using simple images and text (Vanhaelen 2003: 78). These didactic prints are composed of scenes set in a sequence of individually framed narratives, arranged in a box format across the picture plane, a structure similar to the individual rooms of the dollhouse that each contains its own furniture and narrative based on the function of the space. An early-eighteenth-century example by Johannes Kannewet (Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet) details different stages in a woman's life from childhood to marriage (Figure 5). The scenes place an emphasis on education, in school and also in learning gender-related skills from childcare to housework. The didactic print instructs the female viewer in the appropriate steps to take to move through the stages of youth to the goal of establishing a family and household of her own, ending the vignettes with that of the newly married bride. A center panel features girls learning domestic chores

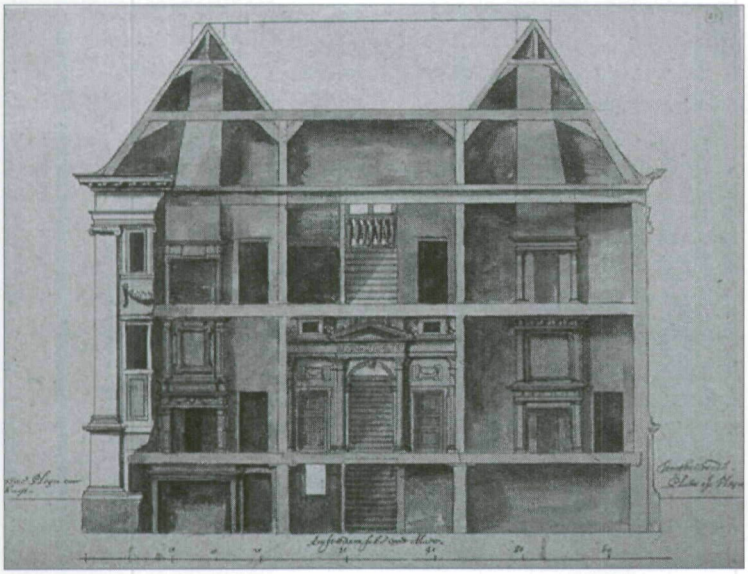

Figure 6
Philips Vingboons, *A buitenplaats in the Beemster polder*, 1639–42, pen drawing with color wash, 12 x 16 in., Zeist, Collection Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg.

while toys, including a doll, sit in the foreground, all circumscribed under the text "Hier spelen de dochterkins" (Here play the young daughters). The *pronk* dollhouses and the presentation of the rooms, which can only be approached and viewed from the front, take the form of *tableaux vivants* whose format recalls this type of instructive print. As the viewer works through the individual scenes in didactic prints, the dollhouses also encouraged the viewer to "read" through the scenes constructed by the boxed spaces of the interior rooms which function in a similar manner as a pictorial "text."

DOLLHOUSE ARCHITECTURE AND THE GENDERED SPACES OF THE DUTCH HOME

While women's roles were domestically oriented, frequent parallels were made between the productivity and sanctity of the home, under the responsibility of wife and mother, in direct relation to the strength of the Dutch Republic. Dutch society tended to view the home as a reflection of the state. The maintenance of the home, its stability, and perpetuity was an issue of great concern, reflected in the moralizing literature of the day. The home was sometimes referred to as *gemeenschap*, or the "little community," a civic ideal reflected in the construction and display of dolls and *pronk* dollhouses (Schama 1987: 388). Like the influential and pervasive moralizing instruction manuals and emblem books that were widespread during the seventeenth century, the dollhouses contained information that their viewers absorbed culturally—mandates to maintain family and home in the proper manner as the cornerstone of the Dutch Republic. In 1558 Dutchman Barthélemy Batt published a treatise on parenting, *De oeconomia Christiana* (The Right Order of a Christian Household), that later appeared in English translation in 1581 as "The Christian Mans [*sic*] Closet Wherein is Contained a Large Discourse of the Godly Training up of Children." *De oeconomia Christiana* described the role of seventeenth-century families as a microcosm of state government, a view espoused by prominent moralists of the age such as Jacob Cats and physician Johan van Beverwijck (Batt 1581: 5) According to Batt, children should be "brought up ... that they may be meet for His Church and the commonwealth ... for the mutual society, help and comfort the one ought to have of the other..."[7] In this way, a properly maintained home was necessary for the vigor of the *vereenicht gemeent*, or the "united community." The dollhouse represents those boundaries and is a microcosmic variation of the house that the wife cares for and oversees. The dollhouse was, after all, a representation of a fully equipped, miniaturized house within a home, just as the Dutch home itself was seen as a structural model of the Dutch Republic.

The structure of the dollhouse as a cabinet that opens into perfectly arranged, recessed, parallel interior spaces evokes an architectonic format that recalls the layout of a plan of a home, with each

Figure 7
Exterior of Dollhouse of Petronella Dunois with window view of lying-in room (left) and "best" room (right), c. 1676–1700, multimedia, variable dimensions, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

room carefully partitioned and separated into its own independent space. The careful display of the entire interior simultaneously—no architectural spaces are hidden or closed from the viewer—additionally shows a relationship to architectural models and cutaway drawings of houses. The three *pronk poppenhuisen* discussed here depict the same frontal construction with direct views into partitioned interiors that are characteristic of a typical architectural plan, exemplified by the prominent Amsterdam architect Philips Vingboons' 1639–42 design for a wealthy merchant's *buitenplaats*, or summerhouse (Collection Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg), built in the Beemster polderland (Figure 6) (Fock 2001a: 72). Like architectural cutaway plans, the dollhouses have no facades, and the structure only allows a frontal view into the individual interior rooms of the house.

The schematic architectural framework of the dollhouse further influences the viewer's perception of the cabinet's interior spaces. Domestic architecture in urban planning treatises characterizes spaces as gender-specific, a concept expounded by seventeenth-century architects and theorists, such as Simon Stevin in *Materiae Politicae: Burgherlicke Stoffen* (Political Subjects: Civil Affairs) (1649) and Willem Goeree's *D'Algemeene Boukunde* (Of the General Building Arts) (1681). Stevin and Goeree both wrote of the necessity of gender-orientated architectural spaces as part of the natural social and domestic hierarchy; according to Stevin, rooms that were identified

by function with the husband or wife were as logical and necessary as the distinct clothing that men and women wore—it was a concept that best suited the home to the perceived needs of each sex (Stevin 1649: 62–8).

In theories that endow architectural spaces with gender-related functions, certain rooms were identified and equipped for use specifically by the matriarch of the house, and likewise the patriarch had dedicated rooms and spaces that were for his personal use only. Some rooms were designated as gender-neutral for general traffic meaning husband, wife, children, servants or guests could occupy the space freely (de Mare 1994: 110). The spaces of the Dutch home were widely defined by didactic texts in terms of public and private, categories that were also gendered as male and female respectively, in a variety of Dutch moralizing texts. For example, Jacob Cats' 1625 treatise on marriage (Houwelyck) clearly places the realms of husband and wife within the scope of public (commerce) and private (household) space:

> The man must go to the street to practice his trade
> The wife must manage the kitchen in the house
> The diligent streetwise man is praiseworthy
> But in the delicate woman, quiet and modest ways
> Go out then, diligent man and earn your living
> And you, young woman, pay attention to your family.
> (Cats 1993[1625]: 72)[8]

The schematic visual format that characterizes both architectural cutaway plans and dollhouse constructions is based on the compartmentalization of interior space and the division of the private interior from the public exterior of the house that it represents. This division has ritual implications for the house when considered to be a space that is defined by carefully marked, compartmentalized boundaries (de Mare 1993: 109). Heidi de Mare has shown that the purpose of creating ritual boundaries was, in part, to establish women as guardians of the home, to delineate the boundary of the space she was to maintain, nurture, and protect (de Mare 1994: 111–12). Women were expected to be helper to their husbands, caretaker of their children, adept at household management, and skilled at supervising servants (Franits 1993: 64). Johannes Colerus' 1663 manual *Verstandige Hollandsche Huyshoudster* (The Knowledgeable Dutch Householder) states:

> A housewife needs to take care of what her husband brings home, to put in its proper place and obediently take only what is needed; but what needs to be saved should be locked up ... she should not resent being burdened with more chores than other housewives, because she also shares the pleasures of running the whole house, like a ruler and owner. (Colerus 1663: 6, cited in Franits 1993: 68)[9]

The possession of a dollhouse that is a complete, miniaturized replica of a home concentrates power over these fully equipped, idealized households exclusively with their female owners, allowing them, through the acts of arrangement and display, to operate the dollhouse "like a ruler and owner." This participation in ritual play placed the dollhouses' female owners in complete control over every aspect of this virtual home.

A primary feature of *pronk poppenhuisen* that supports their didactic function is the selective emphasis on specific rooms that are solely related to the role of the wife and mother in the Dutch home. The exactitude of the dollhouse as replica may be perceived as a facet of the Dutch tendency in the visual arts toward so-called "realism,"[10] and the dollhouses are often used as documentary evidence of home interiors in wealthy seventeenth-century residences, for example in John Loughman and John Michael Montias' *Public and Private Spaces: Works of Art in Seventeenth-century Dutch Houses* (2002: 124–7; also Baarsen 2007: 13–17). The conglomerate of rooms in all three dollhouses, however, is aligned with Golden Age Dutch paintings of domestic interiors in that they selectively rather than completely represent the type of rooms found in a typical Dutch home. Paintings of domestic interiors are known to have incorporated certain features such as luxurious materials and architectural vantage points that were rarely, if ever, part of the actual middle-class Dutch households they depict (Fock 2001b: 84–5). The privileging of spaces reinforces and reflects female duties and perpetuates the ideal of the Dutch domestic sphere as managed by the *huishouder* (housekeeper). The dollhouses of Petronella Dunois and Petronella Oortman both contain kitchens, dining rooms, cellars, linen rooms, a "best room," lying-in rooms, and nurseries, but surprisingly no bedrooms, which were cited by Stevin as a place for the married couple to jointly inhabit (de Mare 1994: 112). Neither do the two dollhouses have rooms that are specifically dedicated to male activity such as a study or a room from which business was obviously conducted. Thus the rooms in the *pronk poppenhuis* are given over to activities and functions associated with the matriarch of the home in a departure from the way in which the homes of wealthy burghers were structured.

The focus of these *pronk poppenhuisen* is so oriented toward the domestic duty of the women who possessed these dollhouses that both Oortman's and Dunois' dollhouses boast a provisions room, an entirely functional space in Dutch homes where peat was stored for heating, but no office or study. Unlike these, Petronella de la Court's dollhouse (Figure 1) does include a study where financial business and brokering would have taken place under the direction of the family patriarch. The tiny study is located on the second "floor" of rooms right above the *voorhuis*, or entryway, however, it is notably small in scale compared to the large, centralized lying in room on the bottom floor for use in conjunction with the birth of a child. Even when closed,

Figure 8
Back of a doll's head from Petronella Dunois' dollhouse, c. 1676–1700, multimedia, variable dimensions, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

the doors of Petronella Dunois' dollhouse have an open panel in the center of each door that leaves the large and prominent lying-in room and the "best room" used for receiving guests still visible (Figure 7), emphasizing the importance of the dual social and familial responsibilities of the Dutch wife.

DOLLHOUSES AND THE PERFORMANCE OF RITUAL PLAY

While all three of the Petronellas' dollhouses present miniaturized interiors that were overwhelmingly related to the duties of mother and wife rather than to the accurate representation of all the rooms in a Dutch burgher's house, the structure and presentation of the three dollhouses follows a consistent format: all take the form of cabinets with doors that open to present the domestic scenes inside, dictating the nature of the dollhouse itself as a performative space; the owner must collect and arrange the dolls and their furnishings in their rooms and then make them visible to the viewer by opening the cabinet doors. The elevated height of the dollhouse itself makes it accessible to arrangement and viewing (van der Ploeg 2003: 102–3). The requirement of opening the doors in order to reveal the interior arrangement lends a theatrical manner to the cabinets' display, and allows the owner to control viewing and handling of the contents. Like the *kunstkamer* function of the fancy dollhouses, the ability to shield the interior of the dollhouse from view imbues the viewing experience with anticipation, pleasure, and heightens the preciousness of the display.[11] When the cabinet doors are open, the viewer is presented with

staged scenes crafted by the owner, another aspect of controlled display. Although Petronella de la Court's cabinet no longer has its doors, all three of the dollhouses originally possessed two panes that closed over the facade of the cabinet. The *pronk poppenhuisen* were thus designed to be performative, that is, they are objects whose power of meaning is partly derived from physical interaction and activation, a mode of manipulation that takes the form of a ritualized, adult variation on play. The practice of arranging and displaying the dollhouses is a facet of performing the domestic ideal, and in doing so reinforces and solidifies socially mandated gender roles (Butler 1988: 519).

The dollhouses' complex combination of ritual play, display, and viewing by the female owner reinforces the domestic charge of the Dutch housewife. For the purposes of this study, the term "ritual play," which includes moving, arranging, changing, and displaying items in the dollhouses, borrows from Victor Turner's definition of ritual as "the performance of a complex sequence of symbolic acts" that is also a "transformative performance revealing major classifications, categories, and contradictions of cultural processes" (Turner 1987: 72–7). The intentional mobility and exquisite detail of the objects solicit touching, holding, moving, and intensely close looking in order to appreciate their aesthetic construction and their interactive didactic function. The choice of collectors' objects in the form of three-dimensional pieces that mimic toys, yet were designed for adult women, demonstrates how the physical construction of the dollhouses encouraged the women who owned them to visualize, participate in, and perform an ideal domestic environment through the arrangement and display of the dolls and furnishings.

The importance of Dutch imagery as moralizing and didactic is one that scholars have consistently associated with domestic subjects in seventeenth-century art; however, those considerations have exclusively focused on images designed for looking. *Pronk poppenhuisen* offer new ways of considering Dutch domestic imagery as works that require the physical involvement of the viewer and that function in the ritual didactic contexts of touch, play, and performance (Huizinga 2003[1949]: 4). Unlike paintings and prints of family and home within depictions of domestic interiors that forge a contemplative relationship with the viewer only through sight, *pronk* dollhouses are works that invite consideration through looking as well as touch. Within Dutch visual culture, *pronk* dollhouses occupy an especially interactive position in relationship to the viewer because their conglomerate of objects required arrangement, rearrangement, and display by the owner.

It is the interactive nature of the dollhouse that makes it exceptional among a consistent vocabulary of appealing domestic imagery in Dutch visual culture. Although modeled on children's toys, the dollhouses were not a source of play as children's toys were; rather they were objects that encouraged ritual play, meaning that they required

a level of activation and engagement in order to fully visualize a domestic ideal.[12] The dollhouses necessitated direct participation by the owner, brought about by careful arrangement, thoughtful presentation, and display. As part of ritual play, the fancy dolls were moved from room to room and placed with furniture and objects decorating the interiors for display according to the preference of the owner. The participant who arranged the dolls also controlled and created an immediate and changeable, dynamic visual narrative that is self-determined. Placing dolls in the lying-in room for instance, constructs a very different scene than placing dolls in the kitchen, or the hallway.

The exquisite detail invested in every aspect of the dolls and the interiors encourages close looking. For example, finely finished ornamentation on household textiles, or the sophisticatedly dressed hair and jewelry of an adult female doll from Petronella Dunois' dollhouse can only be admired if the doll is held in the hand, moved, turned, and intimately inspected at close proximity (Figure 8). Indeed, the minute scale of the dollhouse and all its myriad accessories demand a type of interaction that can only be achieved through the ritual play of physical engagement. The interactive nature of the dollhouse is further demonstrated by the practice of dressing and re-dressing the dolls themselves, as their clothes changed according to newer fashions when they became available (King 1983: 106). Evidence that the dolls' clothes were sometimes changed by the owner also comes in the form of individual, customized garments that were kept in miniature chests, though only a few pieces of clothes stored in the nursery of Petronella Oortman's dollhouse are extant today (Pijzel-Dommisse 2000: 283).

CONCLUSION

Dolls and dollhouses were chosen as the vehicles for artworks purchased by female patrons, notably Petronella Dunois, Petronella Oortman, and Petronella de la Court, because they were objects laden with meaning related to proper instruction and model behavior for Dutch females, and they pleasurably reminded the viewer of her prescribed role within home and family. The *pronk poppenhuis* however, does not represent any ordinary Dutch house, nor merely the broader concept of "house" or "domesticity" itself. It is a selectively ideal example of the Dutch house and home managed by the housewife: it is a completely functioning house, running as smoothly as it should, according to widely published seventeenth- and eighteenth-century domestic manuals such as *De Ervarene en Verstandige Hollandsche Huyshoudster* (The Experienced and Knowledgeable Dutch Housekeeper) (1753). The enticing expression of this ideal permeates every aspect of the *pronk poppenhuisen*: tables are laden with small sculptures of food, chests are filled with clothes, and every room contains fine textiles, ceramics, furniture, and paintings. Material goods are present in superabundance—china, silver, and paintings reflecting the

prosperity of the Dutch merchant class (Hochstrasser 2001: 194–8), while the overwhelming display of riches in the gendered spaces of the home speaks to the careful management and abilities of the Dutch housewife. The dollhouses visualize the ideal familial situation in seventeenth-century Holland and, like moralizing books and didactic prints, ascribe much of the success of the home, and by extension the nation, to the housewife and mother who maintains the household. The patriarch, who presumably provides this abundance, is relegated to a minor figure that barely makes an impact on the interior space of the dollhouse.

The concept of *overvloeds* (abundance) visible in the dollhouses of Petronella Oortman, Petronella Dunois, and Petronella de la Court undoubtedly remarks on the wealth of the owners, but according to cultural and textual directives, such prosperity is the greatest reward and greatest responsibility of the conscientious Dutch wife and mother who can both create and adeptly manage a functioning home (Schama 1987: 377–80). The *pronk poppenhuisen* not only define the ritual boundaries of an ideal Dutch home in a strikingly distinct manner from the abundance of paintings and prints addressing this subject, they provide a physical, interactive, visual model of perfection, and they encourage the viewer to manifest this in her own experience. By positioning the dolls for display within the rooms of the cabinet, the homemaker transforms everyday tasks into a ritualized performance, almost enshrining, as it were, the importance of the home to the family and Dutch community.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank the anonymous readers for their thoughtful and constructive comments on earlier drafts of this article. The three Petronellas are unrelated. Although this study will focus on late-seventeenth-century dollhouses, several other lavish examples were commissioned throughout the eighteenth century as well, including two *pronk poppenhuisen* for Sara Rothé van Amstel, dating to 1743, at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, and another dating to the years 1743–51 at the Frans Halsmuseum in Haarlem.
2. The inventories from 1730 and 1740 confirm that twenty dolls and furnishings from the original collection are present, and some items have been added to over the years. Among other documents is a painting of Petronella Oortman's dollhouse by Jacob Appel, *c.* 1686–1705, now in the Rijksmuseum, and a sketch of Petronella Dunois' dollhouse by Johannes Bosboom, 1883. See also Pijzel-Dommisse (2000: 182, 247–50).
3. For Petronella de la Court, see van der Ploeg (2003: 100); for Petronella Dunois, see Pijzel-Dommisse (1994: 30; 2000: 181–3); for Petronella Oortman, see Pijzel-Dommisse (2000: 247–50).
4. Calom (1626):

Zyd' fluwel, vergulds boorden
Haere teere sieltjens koorden,
Niet een Moeder soo haer kint
Als dit volck haer lysjen mint

5. Johan de Brune 1970[1624]:

Al watmen hier op Aerden siet
Js Poppe-goed, en anders niet.
De mensch, al wat hy daer van vindt,
Die speelter mee, ghelijck een Kind
Hy heeft het Lief een korten tijd,
Dat hy daer naer licht van hem smijt.
Zoo is de mensch dan, alsmen vindt,
Niet tweemaels, maer altijd een Kind.

6. Cats (1993[1625]: 8):

... Ziet, kinders, zo het oude zong,
Zo piept daarna het kleine jong.
Het meijse spelt met poppegoed,
Het knechtje toont een hoger moed;
Het meisje doet de wiege gaan,
Het knechtje laat den trommel slaan;
Het meisje spelt met klein beslag
Dat tot de keuken dienen mag;
Het knechtje met een zwakke lans,
Naar wijze van de ruwe mans;...

7. See Batt (1581), from the unpaginated section entitled "The Dutie of Parents towards their children."
8. Cats (1993[1625]: 72):

De man moet op de straat om zijnen handel gaan;
Het wijf moet in het huis de keuken gadeslaan.
Het vlijtig straatgewoel wordt in de man geprezen;
Maar in een tere vrouw een stil en zedig wezen,
Gij, reist dan, naarstig man, en past op uw gewin,
Gij, zet u jonge vrouw, en let op uw gezin.

9. Colerus (1663: 6): "Een huys-meoder sal het gene/ welck haren man t'huys brengt/ wel bewaren en op-leggen op sijn behoorlijcke plaets/ en gewilligh daer of halen wat men verteeren: maer wat men behouden wil/ wech sluyten ... sy moet het oock niet qualick nemen/ so haer meerder sorge als andere huysmoeders op-geleyt wordt: want sy heft mede het ghenot van het geheele huys/ gelijck een heerscherse en besitster."
10. For foundation studies in this debate on the meanings and problem of "realism" in Dutch art, see Eddy de Jongh (1967) and Svetlana Alpers (1983).

11. For related content on the dollhouses interpreted as *kunstkamer*, see notes 6, 7, and 8.
12. For this concept I am indebted to the work of Christiane Klapisch-Zuber as she describes the handling and possession of dolls by adult women in fourteenth-century Italy. Her study investigates dolls as objects used to encourage the fertility of new brides, or in the case of nuns, to engender piety and provide a constructive devotional outlet for the obviated reproductive impulses of cloistered women (Klapisch-Zuber 1987: 310–26).

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